

Some boys  
bleed:

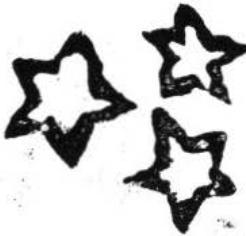
a zine of  
trans postcards



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zine. please give  
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work :: sami:shub



(I made these postcards because)  
I wanted to make art  
about intimate moments  
in one person's trans/gender  
experience. they are not  
meant to homogenize or  
generalize trans/gender  
experiences. every transition  
looks different, is different.



for a good place to start reading, try  
[www.vch.ca/transhealth](http://www.vch.ca/transhealth)

for a good place to start talking, try  
my mom.



Enveloped in a soundproof studio, I scale vocal operatic heights. I want you to be seduced into suspending time and disbelief. The technical acrobatics lure you in, but it's my ability to bring life to poetry and music that creates our emotional connection. As I walk this vocal highwire, you are judging my body and its expressions as a cohesive and *believable* performance. And simultaneously, I'm also awkwardly navigating a gender identity that also yearns to be a *believable*, or at least *credible*, performance.

After years of keeping it at bay, my gender identiy has finally collided with singing in public. I wanted to pretend that I could wear 'drag' and still perform in choirs that enforce dresses or tuxedo costumes. But faced with performing in this outfit, doubt enters my body and becomes tension in my tightly-wound shoulders, locked knees, rigid head, and awkwardly held arms. The musical illusion shatters as self-aware thoughts drift through my head about what I look like and my focus slips. Suddenly, I have a pinched voice, a cracking sound, or a wavering vibrato instead of rich, full, connected, and sparkling soprano music.

When I walk into this studio, I am abruptly

expected to re-engage with my body in an integrative way. I must face myself in the mirror for the first time that day. I take my hands out of my pockets and put them on my waist to connect to my breath support system. The necessary posture demands I stand with my shoulders back. My teacher and I practice dramatic facial expressions over and over until my face feels as unrealistic and ironically I can't tell what I'm meant to be performing.

After three years of weekly lessons, I've made the difficult decision to leave behind the rigid gender roles of classical music. I know it's time to move on, because for the last four months I have simply not sung outside of lessons. I have used having a singing voice as an excuse to not explore what transitioning might look like for me.

My supportive teacher thinks that it is the very self-critical aspects of singing that have helped me, along with my musicianship, to a place of better self-understanding. It's not comforting. Opera has limited revolutionary appeal but the excessive display of passion attracts me. Later, when I reconcile these two places, I will find reasons again to sing with my full voice.



8 different prescriptions + 7 different withdrawals + 6 counselors + 6 years of medication + 3 family doctors+ three suicide attempts + 2 naturopaths + 2 mental health diagnoses + 2 psychologists + 2 years of mental health advocacy work + 1 psychiatrist + 1 herbalist + unrelenting chronic stomach pains, allergies, and tendinitis + a wide support network ... and not-so-coincidentally 9 years of knowing I-was-not-a-girl.

Only after nine years of treatment for anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder did I connect that I have been dealing with gender identity issues from the same age. So I cross-indexed The Gender File and The Mental Health File for the first time.

I started talking to people like my mom, who is remarkable and whose support is liberating. Sometimes it's the people who know the least about trans issues who can level with you on a sincere, respectful, human-to-human level- instead of women's studies students who want to "discuss" whether "your gender is a social construct".

The debilitating anxiety attacks have ceased. Now I get dressed without changing 8 or 9 times; I go to parties where there are more than 5 strangers; I take buses without my heart pounding; I can walk down a busy street and if I choose, I can look people in the eye; I now assert my name and pronouns with people I meet.

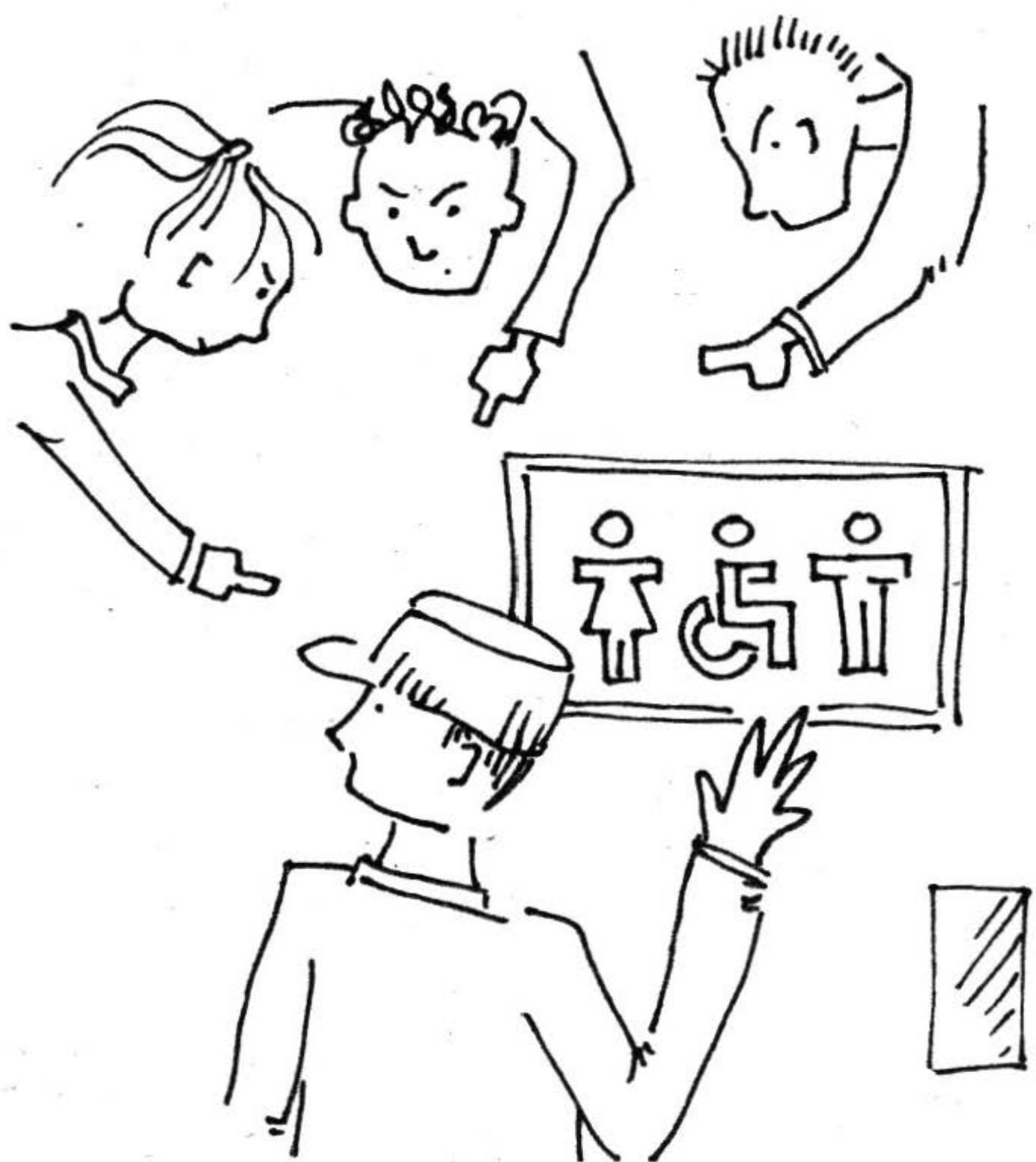
Importantly, the reduced anxiety means I can see work again just as a job, and not an extension of myself that people are judging. I know that I use the tactic of overcompensating to mask my struggles in general. My friends would probably say I'm a workaholic, even though in social justice work it is a gift to be paid for work that you would otherwise live. Overcompensating makes me appear competent and the validation is sincere. Obviously, there must be a reward for workaholics- but it's misplaced validation. Whatever my transition will mean, clearly I'm not doing it for external approval, but I know the silent recognition will replace the underlying anxiety as my truth aligns itself.



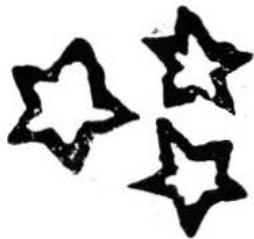
## Some ways to be ally

- practice someone's name/pronoun until it's effortless: others will follow you
- read a book. Ask for websites
- talk about trans/gender issues with non-trans folks - not all the education has to come from trans folks
- say "what pronoun do you prefer"
- don't comment if you think someone "passes" or "doesn't"
- medical information is none of your business. Some trans folks take hormones, get surgery, (change names...) Some don't - and it's not a hierarchy of being "more trans"
- think about why you out someone as trans ... to prove how hip you are? is it necessary to out this person or are you doing it for personal reasons? "from zine" "don't give up"
- listen, listen, listen.

you don't suddenly understand "all trans issues" because you know A trans person. we're different.







Comments/zine trade/more cards:

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— MARCH 2005 — VANCOUVER BC —

